

gulf solidarity

Bulletin on Oman and the Gulf

Number 2 1977

Bimonthly Publication of Gulf Solidarity Committee

25c

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH PFLO

Gulf Solidarity was fortunate to be able to interview Hussein Musa of the PFLO Information Committee recently. The following is the edited transcript.

GS: Why should North Americans be interested in Oman?

PFLO: People in the US are involved in Oman because their government is involved in Oman, on the counter-revolutionary side. So all progressive people in the United States should side with the revolution. Although the British were the main colonial power, the guardian of imperialist interests in the Arabian Gulf including Oman, now the US has political and economic hegemony over the region. The US is also becoming militarily involved. The US replaced Britain in bases it abandoned including Jufair in Bahrain and Masirah in Oman. The United States is the main source of arms supplies to the reactionary regimes — Iranian and Arab — in the region. The US furnishes not only arms but technical experts, officers, and advisors for the repressive apparatus — army, police, and intelligence. Local staff train in the United States.

The US now controls events in the Gulf area. The US State Department says that the Gulf region is very sensitive to the West, that the regimes need a security arrangement. The US programs and plans the counter-revolutionary attack in the whole region. Of course, they manipulate local forces which also have a stake in counter-revolution — Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Muscat regime (Sultanate of Oman). All the reactionary regimes in the Arabian Peninsula have such interests which coincide with US interests and imperialist interests in general.

That is why US progressives, who oppose the US government, should oppose US involvement in Oman. We know that oil revenue actually finances the arms industry in the United States. The big bankers, the capitalists in the United States, stave off a crisis with oil profits. In the past they bled the colonies. Now the Third World, especially oil, returns profits to US capitalists. This situation strengthens the US state and it strengthens the rightist elements within the government, especially the militarists with the growth of the military

industry. That's why we think that progressive US people should side with the revolution and oppose US hegemony and the reactionary regimes.

GULF SECURITY PACT

In 1972, former US State Department official Joseph Sisco originally proposed a security pact for the Gulf of which Iran and Saudi Arabia would be the main pillars, the guarantors of stability and security. By security he meant the security of the regimes and imperialist interests from the revolutionary movement. The pact also came up in the hearings of the subcommittee on the Gulf of the Foreign Relations Committee in 1972 and 1973 when the government encouraged the establishment of a pact including all the states bordering the Gulf except Iraq.

The Shah of Iran also repeatedly calls for a pact like NATO in his interviews and statements. He even blackmailed smaller states by saying that there is a strategic western interest in the Gulf's oil supplies. But the western powers cannot intervene to protect their interests and so the Shah regards it as Iran's role to do so. He would prefer to cooperate with what he calls the "other bank of the Gulf," the Arab Gulf states, but if they don't, Iran can and will act alone, will not wait for their agreement. Iran actually did act alone when it occupied three Omani islands in the Gulf in 1971 and when Iran intervened in Oman in 1973. Its naval and air patrols even intrude on territorial waters and skies of the Emirates. The Iranian navy no longer boards ships except in some cases, but they check the identity of all ships in the Gulf under the pretext of pollution control. They actually signed an agreement with Oman which gives Iran the right to act on the Omani side, representing the Omani government, at the entrance to the Gulf in the Strait of Hormuz.

Of course, Saudi Arabia would also like a pact to restrain Iran from unilateral action. The smaller states, excluding Oman which wants a pact to defeat the revolution, prefer not to have a pact but they have no choice. In the past they voiced their opposition; Kuwait still openly opposes a military pact. But more and more they are losing their power to influence events. If Iran and Saudi Arabia agree on the terms of a pact, the smaller states would be forced to sign it. They cannot resist.

They can maneuver while Saudi Arabia and Iran have differences. A conference on this pact, held in November 1976 in Muscat, failed to reach an agreement. Nevertheless steps to establish the pact are underway. We should not view the pact as just a piece of paper to be signed. For instance there are already bilateral security treaties between Saudi Arabia and all the Arab Gulf states. There are now Saudi forces in

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

Bahrain and Iranian forces in Oman. This is very concrete. Iran has signed a treaty with military aspects with Bahrain. Bahrain has given Iran facilities in airports and naval stations for refueling.

Still Saudi Arabia would like to improve its position. It feels that Iran is stronger in the bargaining. Iran has a direct military presence in the Arabian Peninsula and superior military power. Saudi Arabia would like to offset Iran's advantage with a unified reactionary Arab front with which to bargain with Iran. That's why Saudi Arabia has signed all these agreements and would like to have more and more especially of a military nature.

This is also the reason behind Saudi pressure on Bahrain and Kuwait to dissolve their parliaments and silence the opposition. A military security pact would not have passed through the Kuwaiti parliament. The Saudis aim to force the regimes in Kuwait, Bahrain, the Emirates, and Qatar to follow the Saudi line more closely.

So far there are three proposals for a pact. Iran wants a military pact with a military force under centralized command with the authority to intervene against the revolution or what they call foreign interference, by which they mean Soviet interference. Saudi Arabia would prefer a political agreement. In case of danger, those who sign the pact meet and decide on common action. They consult first and thus restrain Iran.

The Iraqis do not really want a pact because neither Saudi Arabia nor Iran want them as part of it. In fact the Shah and the Saudis would like to replace the present Iraqi regime with a rightwing regime. Because Iraq depends completely on its outlet to the Gulf for the export of oil and imports, especially arms and supplies, and for communications in general, the Iraqi position is to declare the Gulf an area free of foreign presence, that is to liquidate the American presence, and to declare freedom of navigation; this is directed against Iran. It was because of the disagreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia and the Iraqi stand that the conference in Muscat failed last year.

Our expectation is that new contacts will exclude Iraq, and the pact will go ahead.

GS: What about the economic aspects of the pact?

PFLO: This is Kuwait's position, to propose economic cooperation between Gulf states. Thus the pact should be

more economic, social, and cultural. But of course nobody will listen to them because they are weak. If the military terms are agreed, the economic side will be easier. It is well-known that Iran greatly needs Saudi capital and Kuwaiti capital. This is a form of pressure the Saudis use against Iran; they are not giving loans. Iran has asked for a loan of \$5 billion from Saudi Arabia. The battle on prices within OPEC is also related. The Saudis want to keep prices low; Iran wants to raise prices. This is another bargaining point.

STATUS OF THE OMANI REVOLUTION

GS: What is the present status of the revolution in Oman? Has the brunt of the Omani people's struggle shifted from the military into another sphere?

PFLO: We admit there has been a shift in the military balance in Oman since the Iranian military intervention in 1973. Since then the military development has not been in the interests of the Front. For the first time since 1970 the enemy was able to establish a military presence, bases and camps, in the liberated zone. This was not the case before when there was more of a frontier war. The enemy tried to invade the liberated zone from outside, from coastal bases such as Sallalah or from the North across the desert. They repeatedly failed in one campaign after another and were defeated.

The Iranian invasion landed troops inside the liberated zones. This was not a territorial advance on the ground but was airborne. The military balance also shifted. Iran brought a large force with a strong rear in Iran itself. Supplies were easy to come by since Iran is just five hours by C-130 flight. With the facilities in Bahrain and the bases they established on the islands in the Gulf and the British facilities, they always had ample supplies of both men and armaments.

This intervention also came in a period when most Arab regimes experienced internal political changes. Reactionaries dominate official political decisions. In this unfavorable atmosphere, there was no opposition to Iran's invasion on the part of most Arab countries with the exception of Democratic Yemen, Libya and Iraq. So Iran felt it had a free hand to accelerate its intervention without Arab opposition.

Now there are Iranian bases within the liberated zones which are now contested. Neither the Front nor the enemy completely control the liberated zones. The invasion was followed by a

pacification campaign to concentrate the population in villages, to control their activities and movements, to establish police stations for the first time, to search houses, to arrest people in the countryside, to interrogate them, to punish those who cooperate with the revolution. Before, the population which supported the Front was punished by bombardment but not by direct contact which is more efficient.

Because of the dominant Iranian presence, we were in no position to continue what we call direct confrontation. We dissolved the big liberation army into small groups — maximum ten to a group — which can fight and survive on their own. They conduct more clandestine operations, not open operations as before, using only small arms which don't require heavy ammunition and which can be concealed easily. Most operations are either ambushes or planting minefields.

The military balance temporarily favors Iran. Iran has also established bases in the interior of Oman (to the North) as a precaution to be able to quickly crush any outbreak of armed struggle. In 1974, the last time the Front tried to initiate armed struggle in the interior of Oman, we were countered by the army of the Sultanate in cooperation with special Iranian airborne units in Jabal Akhdar (Green Mountain).

This military buildup was accompanied by an increase in the repressive apparatus in Oman — intelligence, police, etc. There are now at least 8 thousand police while in 1970 there were about 500. Intelligence operates in cooperation with Savak personnel, Jordanians, and the British. There is more repression in Oman. There are now about 800 political prisoners. Under the so-called dark regime of Sultan Said bin Taimur, there were something like 80 prisoners.

These measures come on top of neo-colonial penetration of our economy and culture which temporarily hampers the development of the revolutionary movement. Those in the middle especially — petty bourgeois and intelligentsia — went over to the government because they were offered so many rewards. The regime thus widened its base by absorbing the reformist and tribal opposition. Even those in the Front who were tired and unable to continue and endure, have surrendered.

The resources of the Sultanate are large — their income from oil was about \$1.25 billion last year — though their oil revenues are expected to decrease unless new oil fields are found. But they are also dependent on financial

Continued on page 7

MASIRAH: US BASE IN OMAN

Masirah is a small island 15 miles off the coast of Oman. Until early this year, it was used by the British as an airbase. In line with their desire to decrease their formal military and political control in the area, the British pulled out in March. The Qabus government has designated the island a training base for cadets of the Sultan's Air Force, which is still run by British officers.

As early as summer of 1976, the US Navy began using Masirah as a rest stop and refueling facility for reconnaissance missions originating from the Diego Garcia base in the Indian Ocean. Access to Masirah greatly extends the range of the Navy's P3 Orion planes, giving them a wider latitude over northwest Africa, the Gulf, the Indian Ocean and some of Asia. They are also able to transmit reconnaissance material from the island, which allows them to run longer missions.

When the British evacuated, there was much speculation as to whether the US might request a permanent base on Masirah from the Sultan's government. Such an arrangement, however, seemed unpalatable to both parties. For Qabus, an open accommodation to the West would cause him a great loss of face even among the more conservative Arab regimes. The US, trying to negotiate an arms treaty with the Soviet Union and present itself as a

champion of disarmament, could not well afford to pursue a tack of open military expansion in the Indian Ocean.

The best alternative was for the United States to "informally" utilize the facilities on Masirah, thereby maintaining a low profile to the "advantage" of all.

This was perfectly acceptable to the Qabus regime. Said the Omani Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, Yousef al-Alawy, in mid-March: "Oman considers the US as a friendly government . . . and is ready to give whatever facilities are required by the US as a friendly government."

But he hastened to add ". . . Oman has no intention to give the US or anyone else a base."

So, for the time being, US planes are using Masirah on a contractual basis, stopping anywhere from one a month to once a week, with no formal defense treaties between the two governments.

However, whether cooperation will remain at this level for long is questionable. In return for their cooperation, the Qabus government has received numerous dividends. In 1975, prior to US involvement on Masirah, Qabus obtained \$300 million worth of TOW missiles from the US. Since then, aside from various forms of US economic and technical aid, Oman was given a C-130 Hercules military transport by the Shah of Iran as a "gift."

The US raised no objections to this transfer of military equipment, which was used in the offensive against the PFLO last autumn. Subsequent to that, according to the *Washington Post*, the US government has indicated it has "no objections" to further sales by Lockheed of the C-130 to Oman. Such moves seem to indicate closer military cooperation between Washington and Muscat.

In fact as recently as May, the *Middle East Newsletter* reported that representatives of the Qabus regime were in discussion with the Pentagon about the possibility of turning over Masirah Island to the US for use as an airbase. It would appear that the degree of access the US is to have is still an open question.

It was further noted by the M.E.N. that such discussion could be taking place at the initiative of Sudan, which now seeks to enhance the role of the US in the Horn of Africa. Masirah could be used as a staging area for any US involvement in a conflict in the Horn. Given the current tense and unstable situation there, Masirah will be important to watch, as Washington seeks to formulate a strategy to bolster conservative forces and assert its own influence and hegemony.

So, this tiny strip of land could have major importance in the region, and it will be important to keep track of its fate in the months to come.

PFLO DISCUSSES MASIRAH

GS: The US press has covered the situation with Oman's Masirah Island as though there were no agreement for the US to use Masirah. Is the US using Masirah as a base?

PFLO: So far we know of no signed agreement but we know there was an arrangement at the time of Sultan Qabus' visit to the United States in 1975. After this visit Qabus declared that the US asked to use Masirah's facilities. He said he would consider this request with positive attention because of his friendly relations with the United States. Actually the US was already using the facilities. But after Watergate, the new administration could not hide such accords; they had to be open, at least to the Senate.

That's why they had to reveal the facilities the US was using in Masirah. The original agreement between the Sultanate and the British allowed them to share the facilities with a friendly party. Masirah was used extensively during the war in Southeast Asia as a station for refueling squadrons transferred from Europe to Vietnam. War-

ships and submarines also called there because Masirah has both air and sea facilities.

The British officially liquidated their presence in Masirah in March of 1977. But what they actually did, at the Sultan's request, was to withdraw part of their personnel but maintain the most essential. Now they wear the Omani uniform. Pilots and other personnel are seconded to the Omani forces. All the equipment is supposed to be a gift to the Omani government. Actually this is quite economical for the British since the Omani government will pay but the British still have the use of the facilities if they need them for refueling — airplanes or for their navy.

The US now uses these facilities. We know of US personnel on Masirah since the British officially "left." No US planes or ships are permanently based on Masirah but they use it to refuel ships and planes and as a base for reconnaissance planes which monitor the Indian Ocean and fly over countries like Democratic Yemen and Somalia.

GS: How important is it to the US to be able to use Masirah? Is that a signifi-

cant reason for the US to want to retain control in Oman?

PFLO: Yes. Masirah is strategically very important. Masirah is equidistant from Diego Garcia and the Bab al-Mandeb, the gate to the Red Sea and also lies on the route between Southeast Asia and US bases in the Mediterranean. Masirah is also the second main US base in the Indian Ocean. The first is Diego Garcia which is, however, far to the South while Masirah is in the North. Masirah permits close access to the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea as well as the Indian Ocean.

Masirah is especially suitable because it does not create problems with the population since it is isolated. In fact the regime is pressuring the fishermen to leave the island so that it will be completely military. Masirah is also valuable as a reserve in case of American intervention in Oman. Their present policy is not to intervene directly, but just in case . . . Masirah also helps them provide support to Iranian and Saudi forces. The US has no alternative in the area. Masirah is the only island in the northern part of the Indian Ocean.

JFM
84-165

IRAN: ARMS AND THE SHAH

The plot might have been borrowed from an afternoon soap opera. The Shah of Iran played the role of a rejected suitor who disparages the chastity of the woman he ardently desires. But like the soap opera, the Shah and the Carter administration have made up. For about \$1.2 billion, the Shah will get seven of the most expensive aircraft ever produced though some highly-classified special instrumentation will be removed to satisfy Congressional critics who feared it might fall into the hands of the Soviet Union! These complex radar-equipped planes, known as AWACS, can be used to monitor and control air battles over wide areas. They are so sophisticated that "the US Air Force would have to provide several hundred technical people for many years," according to the *New York Times*, thus adding to the present 24,000 US military advisors and CIA agents who operate the war machine of the Shah. The Shah already had planes so advanced that only 20 retired US Navy pilots were qualified to fly them. The Shah placed advertisements to lure four of them into coming to Iran.

Through such purchases the Shah's regime recycles \$20 billion in oil revenues annually to help bail out the crisis-ridden economies of the advanced capitalist countries. It was no secret that the US air force sought foreign customers for AWACS to lower unit production cost and keep Boeing's production of the plane profitable. The Shah also invests in nearly bankrupt monopolies such as the West German Krupp Steel, loans funds to desperate England and Italy, grants "aid" to the dependent Sadat regime in Egypt, and supplies oil to Vorster's South Africa and Smith's Rhodesia. These ventures account for another \$7 billion over the last 2½ years. The Shah's regime has also made Iran into the single largest Middle Eastern market for the US and other imperialists. In the next five years Iran will import \$55 billion in arms and other commodities from the US in addition to smaller amounts from France, Japan, and West Germany.

In short, Iran meets all the demands made on a dependent victim of imperialism. The resultant chronic economic crisis appears in a 30% inflation rate, bankrupt agriculture, a severe housing shortage, and skyrocketing rents — all

of which fall mainly on Iranian peasants and workers. To maintain such policies the Shah's regime stops at nothing in trampling on human rights — terror and repression, violence directed against the mass movement, especially workers and students, torture, and massacres of revolutionaries.

SHAH VISITS US

The Shah of Iran visited the U.S. to ask for more arms November 14-16. On November 15, over 10,000 anti-Shah demonstrators converged on Washington for a massive and militant demonstration. The Shah had paid expenses and a bonus to several thousand supporters to fly to Washington but they were outnumbered more than 2 to 1. Washington police teargassed and beat up anti-Shah forces after they were attacked by the Shah's supporters. Gas drifted up to the White House where the Shah and his wife cried as President Carter welcomed them.

In San Francisco, over two thousand demonstrators marched to the Iranian Consulate to protest the Shah's visit and condemn his regime.

BAHRAIN: US ACCORDS WON'T LAST

(Translated from "5 March" organ of People's Front in Bahrain, July 1977)

Though a recent announcement stated that the US Naval base at al-Jufair in Bahrain would terminate by June 1977, in reality the base will continue to be used. The only change is that the US Commander will no longer maintain his permanent headquarters at al-Jufair. Even the western media dealt frankly with the allegations of US withdrawal. The *International Herald Tribune*, close to official American policymakers, commented: "The outlook appears good for the US to retain sufficient access to meet its essential needs while sparing these cooperative Arab countries from the political embarrassment of accepting US bases. Direct US military presence will become less strategically based along the lines of the Nixon Doctrine."

On the other hand the host countries (especially Bahrain and Oman) appear ready to permit full and expanded military cooperation between their armed forces and the US. Together Oman and Bahrain provide an important western buttress in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean areas.

There is no doubt that the old agreement is dead, but it is certain that the new agreement is tailored to fit the needs of US strategy and its puppets, especially the regime in Bahrain. In the words of Bahrain's foreign minister: "It is possible for the US to acquire the same privileges as before if they so request."

These bases should be linked with Carter's energy program which aims not only at assuring "reliable" sources of energy to meet US needs but also at defending these sources. Thus as US needs accelerate, its military presence follows suit whether direct or camouflaged. US imperialism would not have been prepared to change the agreement had it not been pressured by the growing popular struggle in Bahrain, led by its nationalist forces, against US presence.

On this basis we can understand the new agreement in the context of the entire region and the strategic requirements of the US which are clearly defined in the Nixon Doctrine. The Doctrine aims to preserve US interests (oil) by strengthening local puppets politically and militarily in such a way

that they are able to do the dirty work for the US (i.e. let Asians fight Asians and Arabs fight Iranians). The new agreement does precisely that. It substitutes mobile naval bases for the old stationary ones thereby relying on highly sophisticated military and reconnaissance bases such as that under construction in southwest Iran at a cost of \$2 billion. When all of this is added to the Omani regime's Masirah arrangement with the US, the US Air Force clearly gains unlimited freedom of movement in Oman and around the Gulf.

Thus the agreement is simply a new trick aimed at containing the popular opposition to the US presence in Bahrain. In this light it is conceivable that in the near future these facilities will be granted in the name of local reactionaries, namely Iran and Saudi Arabia. The latter is now trying to establish an Air Force base in Bahrain.

The Bahraini people waged a consistent struggle against the American presence at al-Jufair. They will continue to fight the new agreement and its imperialist and reactionary manifestations.

YEMEN AND OMAN

A BRIEF HISTORY

This series of articles is reprinted, slightly edited, from **Palestine in Struggle**, published by the Canada-Palestine Solidarity Association which, though defunct, may be reached through the Canadian Arab Federation, P.O. Box 3003, Vancouver, B.C., Canada

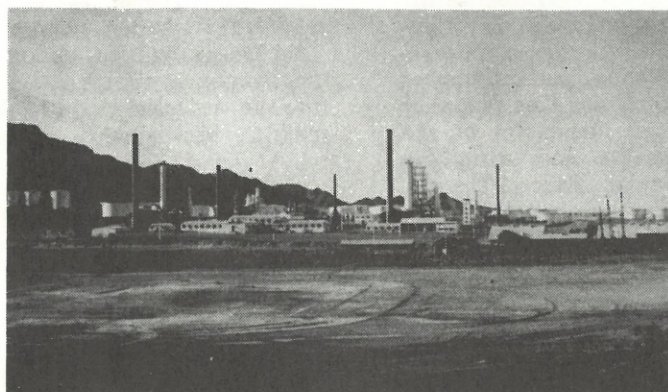
INTRODUCTION

Why are British officers and Iranian and Jordanian troops fighting against a revolution in the Sultanate of Oman on the Arabian peninsula? Why does the CIA maintain a training base at the oasis of Sharora in the Saudi desert near Yemen? Why has the U.S. opened new military bases in Diego Garcia, Bahrain and Masirah and Oman and why did a U.S. aircraft carrier recently sail in the Gulf for the first time in twenty years? Why was former CIA Director Helms serving as Ambassador to Iran? And why does Iran, with its billions of petro-dollars, have to borrow money to buy arms.

The answers to these questions are not the subject of a single article. The revolutionary process on the Arabian peninsula is richly complex. Its history is one of interaction, first with pre-capitalist empires of which the last was Ottoman Turk. Even before the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the conclusion of the first imperialist war (World War I), British colonialism had arrived on the scene to secure the sea approaches to India. More recently has come the clash between the rising tide of Arab nationalism near the Mediterranean and the rigid societies of the Peninsula. In the 1960's, struggles in both North and South Yemen advanced and revolution spread to Oman, first in the southern province of Dhofar, and later throughout the country.

This series of articles will aim at discussing only a small part of these developments. The intent is to give some general background on the revolutions in Yemen and Oman in order to generate both understanding and solidarity in North America.

An historic experiment is underway in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, a small country attempting to build Marxist socialism while surrounded on all sides by hostile forces. The Omani revolution is also in a critical stage. With great courage and tenacity, the fighters of the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman have fought the troops of the Shah of Iran,



Aden refinery before British troops withdrew: BP leaves 10 years later

Sultan Qabus of Oman, King Hussein of Jordan and British colonialism to a standstill. The air war in Oman has been stepped up to an intensity comparable only to Indochina. Although the heroic Omani fighters have won many battles, the Omani people are paying a heavy price in the currency of bombs, terror and savage repression by the reactionary authorities.

North Yemen was under Ottoman rule at the end of the first imperialist war. But the Imams (religious rulers) who controlled it kept it in brutally-enforced backwardness and isolation as a strategy to keep themselves in power. Factories, schools and hospitals, among many other things, were all outlawed in Yemen before 1962 and Oman prior to 1970.

Even when oil was discovered in the Arabian Gulf in the early 1930's, Yemen and Oman were both left relatively untouched with a few very significant exceptions. These included the migration of workers from both Oman and Yemen to the oil fields and refineries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain and the construction of a huge oil refinery near Aden by British Petroleum in the wake of a crisis caused by the temporary nationalization of Iranian oil production by the anti-imperialist Mossadegh government in 1952. Aden also became the primary British military outpost between Gibraltar and Hong Kong as well as one of the largest ports in the world because of its convenience for Suez Canal traffic.

Other influences on the people were Radio Cairo broadcasts following the Egyptian officer's coup in 1952 led by Nasser and a few nationalist military officers in the Yemeni army who were sent to Iraq for training. Although the

apparatus of repression in both north and south Yemen and in Oman seemed as solid as rock, it was through these small chinks that the wind of revolutionary change would arrive.

PART I: WESTERN COLONIALISM ARRIVES ON THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

In the early 19th Century, the Sultanate of Oman was a great sea power with thousands of trading ships plying the Indian Ocean from the East Indies to Zanzibar which was an Omani colony. The Portuguese had already won some minor conquests in both Yemen and Oman, but it was a relatively easy task for the British to push out the Portuguese and establish themselves firmly in power.

In Yemen, the British take-over was rapid and total. Using a flimsy pretext, the British seized the port of Aden, near the Red Sea, in 1839. In Oman, as the British steamships destroyed the Omani economy, the British gradually increased their political and economic stranglehold over the Sultanate particularly after 1856 when Zanzibar, a lucrative source of income, was politically separated from Oman. Because the only British interest at stake was the sea route to India, Britain's most valuable colony, colonialism had little significant economic impact on Yemen and Oman with the exception of the absolute social rigidity imposed by British troops and later planes. In order to protect their flank, the British signed agreements with local tribe leaders who happened to be temporarily in control at the time, and to this day, the same families are maintained in power.

TO BE CONTINUED.

NEWS BRIEFS

The PFLO reports that Foreign Ministers from the Gulf states are considering a meeting in Cairo to discuss the Gulf Security Pact and reach a compromise. So far there is no sign of a breakthrough in resolving the differences despite many contacts. This failure is positive from the standpoint of the national movements and struggling people of the region. Saut al-Thawra, September 1977.

Relations between Sultan Qabus of Oman and Pierre Gemayel's Phalangist party of Lebanon continue to improve. Since Qabus is a Muslim and Gemayel a Christian, their collaboration proves that both are reactionaries first and religious zealots second. Contact between the two dates back to the CIA-sponsored conference at Beit Marai in Lebanon several years ago. During the war in Lebanon, Qabus gave the Phalangists about \$10 million and this aid continues. Recently Qabus met with Gemayel. The PFLO believes that it is only a matter of time for Qabus to meet with the Phalangists' Israeli allies. Saut al-Thawra, September 1977.

In our last issue, we announced the formation of a People's Front in Qatar. We have since learned that this report was spurious. No such organization exists at present in Qatar though there is a progressive movement there.

Gunmen assassinated North Yemen's President Ibrahim Hamdi and his brother in the capital city of San'a in October. Hamdi was about to visit the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen to the South. Salem Rubai Ali, President of Democratic Yemen had only recently visited North Yemen. The exchange of visits apparently marked an improvement in relations. Radio Aden charged that the assassination was masterminded by reactionary forces who wished to prevent reconciliation, cooperation, and eventual reunification of Yemen. Ahman Hussein Ghashmi replaced Hamdi.

Jamshid Amouzegar replaced Amir Abbas Hoveida as Prime Minister of Iran in August. Hoveida had failed in fulfilling his promises to fight inflation, corruption, a housing shortage, pollution, and the degeneration of spiritual values in Iranian society. The Shah

thus conveniently uses Hoveida as a scapegoat to divert dissatisfaction among the Iranian people and retains him as an advisor. Lest anyone hope Amouzegar will be any different in implementing the Shah's commands, see the last issue of Gulf Solidarity for pearls of his wisdom.

The Defense Minister of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Mahammad Bin Rashid called for coordination among the Gulf States in the field of armament and training so that the armies of these states can become a single army capable of defending any country against foreign attack. He stressed that such coordination was important and necessary because of limited manpower resources of states such as the UAE and Kuwait.

Thus in the name of defending from foreign attack, i.e. the local inhabitants, Sheikh Rashid would bring in outside forces, presumably the Saudis or Iranians, because there aren't enough people willing to defend the reactionary regimes. Quite an admission.

US exports to Arab countries topped \$7 billion in 1976 while imports were nearly \$13 billion, mostly for oil, an 89% increase from 1975. This deficit won't survive long though, even on paper. The US Army Corps of Engineers was appointed by the Saudi government to oversee \$10 billion worth of construction projects for the current five year plan. This figure was later revised upward to \$16.7 billion most of which will be awarded to American contractors. The entire plan calls for expenditures of \$142 billion. Arab investment in the US is now estimated at \$20 billion and growing about \$1 billion per year. Only in 1972 did US exports to the Arab world first pass the \$1 billion mark.

PFLO denounces arrests in Oman

In August of this year, the Central Information Committee of the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman called on all humanitarian organizations and progressive and peace-loving forces around the world to take part in exposing the continuous hysterical arrests and barbaric techniques of torture being used against Omani patriots. The

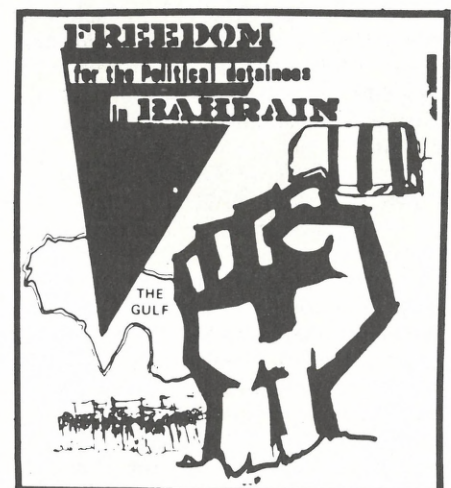
PFLO specifically denounced the latest arrest campaign in June 1977 when over 100 people were arrested including workers, students, government employees, and soldiers.

The PFLO also called on progressive organizations to help save the lives of prisoners, many of whom have died under torture carried out under the guidance of British, Jordanian, and Iranian intelligence officers.

OMANI-YEMENI WOMEN'S SOLIDARITY

A delegation of the Omani Women's Organization participated in the Second Congress of the Yemeni Women's Union Sixth Region chapter held on the 25th and 26th of September 1977. At the closing session a message of solidarity was delivered by Wafa Yasser, Chairwoman of the Omani Women's Organization, in which she fully supported the resolutions of the Congress. Comrade Yasser said that "the struggles of women are immense especially within a society that has been saturated with reactionary ideas, customs, and traditions, that not only reinforces inequality between woman and man but also any other thing that hinders the progress of our societies as a whole." Members of the OWO also took part in the cultural program of the Congress.

The YWU renewed its strong support and full solidarity with the struggles of Omani women and the just struggle of the Omani people under the leadership of the PFLO.



PFLO STATEMENT ON US GULF POLICY

A White House memorandum, number 10, announced a recent US decision to include the Arabian Gulf area within the US defense strategy as a priority. The memorandum had been under study for six months and was revealed when it was sent to the Pentagon for implementation.

This decision reflects US aggressive intentions against the Arab nation expressed four years ago by Henry Kissinger when he threatened to occupy the oil-producing areas. These threats were coupled with US military exercises and maneuvers on landing and fighting in the desert. Apparently US ruling circles decided that the present time is suitable for openly adopting such a provocative policy because of deteriorating political conditions in the entire Arab arena.

The People's Front for the Liberation of Oman sees the decision as merely an extension of existing US policy. The

PFLO summarized its position as follows:

1) The Front rejects and condemns this decision and resolves to fight it with the force of arms. The safety and security of the area are threatened only by the US itself and its two watchdogs in Tel Aviv and Tehran.

2) We see a consistent US position regarding all US interests in the Arab area and particularly in the Arab East. This announcement shows that the US does not care about those Arab parties who cling to the hope that the "wisdom" of President Carter and his "real" desire to solve the Middle East problem, based on his appreciation of the interests of the various inhabitants, could cause the US to alter its imperialist policy. The US will not abandon its interests or its allies either in the Arabian Gulf or in occupied Palestine.

3) The PFLO views the US decision

as a clear expression of the real position of US imperialism which is one of total hostility to the people of the region. All peoples of the Arab nation and their national forces must not only reject and resist the US position in words but must unite to confront American greed and its open threats and exploitation of the rights of our people.

4) The PFLO reiterates its opposition to all security arrangements in the region, which are basically creations of the US government, and resolves to adopt all necessary defensive measures against the expected US invasion. Oil would be among the defensive weapons used to defend the prestige and safety of the nation.

21 September 1977

People's Front for the Liberation
of Oman

Continued from page 2

support of Arab reactionaries especially Saudi Arabia. The capabilities at the disposal of the regime are international. Arms supplies come from the western countries — United States, Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, and even Sweden. They recruit internationally for mercenaries who come from all the capitalist countries. So temporarily, the movement has setbacks.

But we continue the armed guerrilla operations on a low level. Our main emphasis at this point is to strengthen the Front's organization, because the Front has lost a lot of its cadres to arrest or surrender — some from the ranks and even up to the level of local commanders have surrendered. We see this as healthy. If they stayed, they would work for a defeatist line. It's better that they give up. What is important at this stage is for the people — even if the movement gets hit — to have no doubt that this organization, the People's Front for the Liberation of Oman, is not compromising on national issues, not compromising with the enemy and is ready to struggle for many years. There is no compromising line within the Front.

So we work to reorganize the Front because of many changes. The transformation of the economy as it integrates into the international capitalist market (system), neocolonialism, causes new classes to appear. People are now more divided according to their class rather than tribal affiliation. Problems become more complicated as the enemy fights with all means — mili-

tary, psychological, propagandistic, and repressive. But that is also why there is a higher degree of political consciousness among the people.

We are forming special mass organizations for the different segments of the society — workers, students, etc., such as the National Union of Omani Students and Omani Women's Organization. Of course all kinds of mass organizations are prohibited by the Sultanate but we have to establish them in such a form that is suitable to work under repression. This is an urgent need.

GS: In Dhofar, where the Front is more organized, what would a Front representative mobilize the people to do, what is the program?

PFLO: They mobilize them now more against the Iranian occupation, to boycott the Iranians, not to assist them, not to sell them any food, and not to accept concentration. We have succeeded to some extent in this. The regime has managed to attract the population to the old villages, which had been deserted but not to the new ones which they established in the countryside,

Continued on page 8



The PFLO needs your support.
Send your contributions to:

People's Front for the Liberation of
Oman
P.O. Box 5037
Ma'alla, Aden
People's Democratic Republic of
Yemen

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

For one year: \$2 individuals, \$3 outside the U.S., and \$5 institutions. Sample copies are \$.50, including postage. Send checks made payable to **Gulf Solidarity** to P.O. Box 756, Berkeley, CA 94701. We also welcome your contributions to help to continue to publish **Gulf Solidarity**. Bulk rates are 15 cents per issue plus postage.

because the nature of their mode of life as shepherds and migrant farmers depends on where the rain and pasturage are. It also doesn't suit the people to live in government settlements. We oppose these settlements. These are now the main efforts.

GS: And in the rest of Oman?

PFLO: The main propaganda is along two lines: first, to mobilize people for our political purpose, that is, to get rid of the mainly Iranian foreign occupation and now American bases, and to topple the regime which is cooperating openly with them. The second line is to expose the nature of the regime — the corruption, repression, denial of democratic rights — and to raise the right of the masses to improve their living conditions, to have their own organizations. But these have to serve the national issue. We see that these daily struggles, the daily mobilization over living conditions are needed in order to generate consciousness around the national issue. Without the national issue these will be economist struggles.

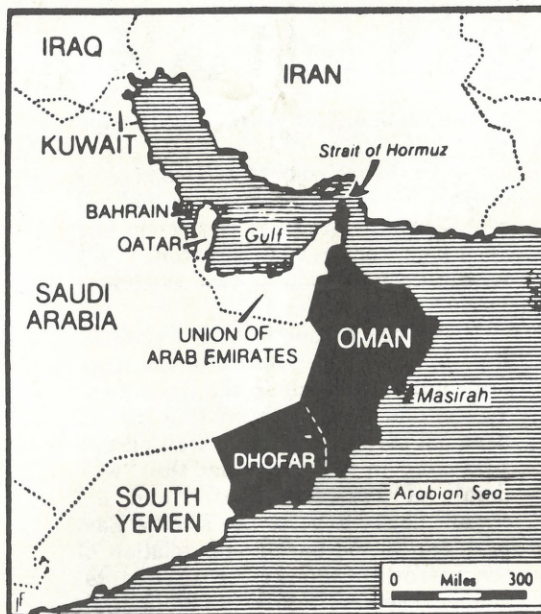
GS: In an earlier period, if you were organizing a worker in Sallalah, you might call on him to join the Front and fight. Now you tell him to stay where he is and organize.

PFLO: Yes. He has to stay. Now there is a military presence everywhere in the country.

We also have to mobilize people on the national issue, to create the atmosphere favorable for armed struggle. In Dhofar this problem is solved because armed struggle has been practiced, but for the rest of Oman, because of strong repression and fear, we have to create a new atmosphere and then we can initiate armed struggle. Otherwise we will be isolated.

GS: Is there defeatism in the North because of the defeat of the revolution there in 1959?

PFLO: Yes. Many people are pessimistic, but the survival of the Front is encouraging; it gives them another idea. The first four years of the new regime, 1970-74, were the years of rapid transformation. Some people were negligent to the cause of the national struggle because they were readjusting to their new economic circumstances in the country. But now as the class structure stabilizes and the economy expands, problems increase. The extension of capitalist control and corruption, brings inherent problems — inflation, lack of housing and communication, and repression — which the regime cannot solve. In spite of outside support, they lack the capability of Kuwait or Saudi Arabia to solve these problems especially with the foreign presence which is antagonistic to national feelings and pride.



PFLO'S PROGRAM

GS: How much contact does an Omani outside Dhofar have with the Front?

PFLO: The organization of the Front is there. We issue pamphlets from time to time, but of course it is not enough. The brainwashing to which the people are subjected is more intense than the propaganda of the Front. The Front has to develop its organization and then develop its propaganda. We have not reached the level such that we can call the struggle a day-to-day struggle. There are uprisings from time to time, strikes, but it's not day-to-day which is necessary before we develop to armed struggle.

GS: This must be more advanced in Dhofar than in other parts of Oman?

PFLO: Yes, because in spite of all the Iranian attacks, they have not succeeded in destroying the structure. The people themselves have for years been in contact with the Front. The Front has done a lot of things for them.

Even tribal military units set up by the government to act as local guards for the Iranians are openly against the Iranians and support the Front fighters. They come from the countryside and even if they aligned with the government because of complications within the Front or because they have been tempted by money and the difficulties in the countryside, they also see what the Iranians do to the population — harassment and so on.

IRANIAN INVASION

GS: How long can the Iranian invasion continue? Can they maintain it for ten or twenty years or are there inherent problems in the invasion?

PFLO: We are sure that the Iranians

will not leave Oman unless they are forced to by revolution. The Iranian strategy in this region, and this is also the American strategy, is to have direct Iranian military presence in the sensitive areas, especially while there is a possibility of revolutionary activities such as in Oman. The Iranians have fought and sacrificed a lot to establish their foothold in Oman. Now they have no intention of withdrawing. They are modernizing their bases and making their temporary ones permanent with buildings, facilities, equipment, etc. They even bring modern arms and use Oman for training.

GS: At the beginning of the invasion, Iran's soldiers were not very effective and had to be shifted every few months.

PFLO: They do the same thing now. Every six months they change.

GS: Are they an effective fighting force?

PFLO: They are an effective fighting force, but they now use fewer ground troops and more airborne troops and planes. They emphasize their air force and secondarily the navy. They view their bases as staging points for the future. They maintain them so that they can quickly supply any big operation.

GS: Do you see any parallel between the Iranian Army and the dissention in the US Army in Vietnam?

PFLO: No. The level of the resistance has to develop much more before they start to disintegrate. They are now in a comfortable position.

GS: Do you expect the US to become more involved?

PFLO: I think the US will not intervene unless Iran fails and there will likely be years of fighting before this happens.

GULF SOLIDARITY
P.O. BOX 756
BERKELEY, CA 94701

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
OAKLAND, CA
PERMIT #3885